

December 29, 1962

Dear Mr. President:

The Ambassador from Turkey presented an interpretation of Khrushchev's behavior in the Cuban crisis that might interest you; namely, that Khrushchev didn't know the difference in U.S. behavior between a Presidential and a Congressional election year.

He observed Khrushchev closely in New York in the fall of 1960 when he represented Turkey at the U.N. General Assembly. He noted then the impact on Khrushchev of seeing the U.S. rudderless during the election campaign, without even Lodge in attendance. He recalled that Jerry Wadsworth was moved into the breach. Khrushchev disported himself freely in that atmosphere. He is convinced that Khrushchev thought the same disarray would prevail during the election campaign of 1962.

We can leave it to the historians to check it out.

May I add a word. I remember with admiration the depth of your concern for the Cubans on the beach at the worst of the April 1961 affair, the night of the Congressional reception, when there was occasion for many other things to be on your mind. And I know that personal concern never left you. Their return now is thus doubly gratifying.

A Happy New Year.

Faithfully yours,

*W. W. Rostow*  
W. W. Rostow

The President

Washington, D. C.

Dowling to SecState, Oct 24, 11 am (received 2 6:02 am Oct 24)

Acheson and I spent almost two hours with Chancellor late yesterday. He had obviously ~~repeatedly~~ reflected further on course of action re Cuba announced by President and had concluded it would be insufficient to check Soviets. He did not at first say so, however, but after indicating his support for and confidence in the President, urged that we do more to create greater unrest in Cuba. Despite Acheson's explanation of how difficult this would be under Castro's police system, Chancellor pursued discussion at length, in course of which he referred to telegram from German UN observer explaining limited nature of US quarantine action, and said we should consider all possible actions for elimination of Castro regime and Soviet influence in Cuba, including rapid tightening of quarantine restrictions.

Acheson eventually moved discussion away from question of unrest in Cuba by explaining courses of action which had been available to President and why reasons why current policy was decided upon. Adenauer listened most attentively, and at end seemed reassured but he was obviously still convinced of necessity for further firm measures at early date to achieve our purposes. He ended by saying, "Above all, no paper war."



Oct 24, 1962 9:24 pm

Dear Mr. Pres.

I have received your letter of October 23, familiarized myself with it and am answering you.

Imagine, Mr. President, that we had posed to you those ultimative conditions which you have posed to us by your action. How would you have reacted to this? I think that you would have been indignant at such a step on our part. And that would have been comprehensible to us.

Having posed these conditions to us, you, Mr. President, have challenged us. Who asked you to do this? By what right have you done this? Our relations with the Republic of Cuba, like our relations with other states, regardless of what sort of state it may be, concern only the two countries between which those relations exist. And if one is really going to talk about a quarantine, referred to in your letter, it can be established according to accepted international practice, only by the agreement of states between themselves, and not by any sort of third party, there exist, for example, quarantines on agricultural goods and products but in the case at hand, the question is in no way one of quarantine, but rather of far more serious things, and you yourself understand this.

You, Mr. President, are not declaring quarantines, but advancing an ultimatum and threatening that unless we subordinate ourselves to your demands, you will use force. Consider what you are saying! And you wish to convince me to agree to this! Emph what does agreement with such demands mean? This would mean to guide oneself in one's relations with other countries not by reason but to indulge arbitrariness. You are no longer appealing to reason, but wish to intimidate us.

And, Mr. President, I cannot agree with this and think that in your heart you recognize that I am correct. I am convinced that in my place you would act the same way.

Reference to the decision of the Organization of American States cannot in any way substantiate the demands now advanced by the US. This organization has absolutely no authority or basis to make decisions like that of which you speak in your letter.

Consequently, we do not recognize these decisions. International law exists, generally recognized norms of conduct exist. We firmly support the principles of international law, strictly observe the norms regulating navigation on the high seas and in international waters. We observe these norms and enjoy the rights recognized by all states.

You wish to compel us to renounce the rights that every sovereign state enjoys, you are attempting to legislate in questions of international law, you are trampling upon the generally accepted norms of this law. And all this not only out of hatred for the

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Cuban people and its government, but also as a consideration  
result of considerations of the election campaign in the US.  
What morality, what law can justify such an approach by the American  
government to international affairs? You cannot find such a morality  
and such a law, because the actions of the USA with regard to Cuba  
are outright banditry, or, if you like, the folly of degenerate  
imperialism. Unfortunately, the peoples of all countries, and at least  
of all the American people, can suffer gravely from such folly, since  
the USA has fully lost its former invincibility with the advent  
of contemporary types of armament.

Consequently, Mr. President, if you coolly weigh the situation  
which has developed, not giving way to passions, then you will  
understand that the Soviet Union cannot fail to reject the arbitrary  
demands of the USA. When you confront us with such conditions, try  
to put yourself in our situation and think how the USA would react  
to these conditions. I do not doubt that if someone had attempted  
to dictate conditions of this sort to you, the USA, you would have  
rejected such an attempt. And we also say--No.

The Sov Government considers that violation of freedom of the  
use of international waters and international air space is an  
act of aggression, pushing mankind towards the abyss of a world  
missile-nuclear war. Consequently, the Sov Gov cannot give instructions  
to the captains of Soviet vessels bound for Cuba to observe the instructions  
of the American naval forces blockading that island. Your  
instructions to Soviet mariners are strictly to observe the generally  
recognized norms of navigation in international waters and not to  
retreat from them by even one step. And if the American side  
violates these rules, it must realize that sort of responsibility  
will rest upon it in that case. Of course, we shall not be simply  
observers of piratical actions of American ships on the high seas.  
We will then be forced for our part to take the measures which we  
deem necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights. For  
this we have all that is necessary.



3.

Oct 25, 1962

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have received your letter of October 24, and I regret very much that you still do not appear to understand what it is that has moved us in this matter.

The sequence of events is clear. In August there were reports of important shipments of military equipment and technicians from the Soviet Union to Cuba. In early September I indicated very plainly that the US would regard any shipment of offensive weapons as presenting the gravest issues. After that time, this Government received the most explicit assurances from your Government and its representatives, both publicly and privately, that no offensive weapons were being sent to Cuba. If you will review the statement issued by Tass in September, you will see how clearly this assurance was given.

In reliance on these solemn assurances I urged restraint upon those in this country who were urging act on in this matter at that time. And then I learned beyond doubt what you have not denied--namely, that all these public assurances were false and that your military people had set out recently to establish a set of missile bases in Cuba. I ask you to recognize clearly, Mr. Chairman, that it was not I who issued the first challenge in this case, and that in the light of ~~these~~ this record these activities in Cuba required the responses I have announced.

I repeat my regret that these events should cause a deterioration in our relations. I hope that your Government will take the necessary action to permit a restoration of the earlier situation.

Sincerely yours,



Oct 26, 1962: On K's conversation with W.E. Knox, Westinghouse Electrical International, Moscow, Oct. 24.

(conversation including Davis, Guthrie, Sheridan, Sonnenfeldt)

1. K was loath to think that what occurred on Oct 22 was done for electoral reasons. It appeared to stem from hysteria. The President was very young man; in fact K's own son was older. K had had his differences with Eisenhower but was confident that Eisenhower would have done things differently. ((! Why? How? note E recommendations))

2. Except in time of war a blockade is illegal. If the US stopped and searched Sov ships, this would be piracy.

3. K repeated several times that Sov ships were unarmed, that some may turnaround and that some would be stopped, but sooner or later the SU would send its submarines to sink the ships that were stopping the Sov ships.

4. The US is now unable to take over Cuba.

5. To Mr. Knox's comment that the President was infuriated because he had been assured that the SU would not send offensive weapons to Cuba and found that he had been lied to, K replied with a half hour discussion on the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons. ((Did he deny lying?)) The US said that its Turkish bases were defensive but what was the range of the missiles there.

6. K then stated specifically that the SU had an anti-aircraft missile in Cuba as well as ballistic missiles with both conventional and nuclear warheads. The Cubans were too temperamental to turn over these weapons to them; for this reason all sophisticated military equipment were under direct, 100 percent Soviet control. They would never be fired except in defense of Cuba and then only on the personal instructions from K as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. K added that if the US did not believe this it should attack Cuba and it would find out the answer. Guantanamo would disappear the first day.

((Note: significance of snootdown on 27 Oct in light of K's emphasis here and Oct 27 morning on his personal, and Soviet's responsibility. Also, concern for "temperamental" Cubans; and report that Mikoyan was representing concern for their action after Oct 26))

7. K would like to talk with the President. He had planned to attend the UN this fall, but the UN is a place for arguing, not a place for negotiating. He would be delighted to visit the Pres or for the Pres to visit him or a rendezvous at sea or anywhere else. A summit was desirable and it should not be a circus.

8. What occurred on Oct 22 was particularly disappointing because Rusk and Gromyko had practically agreed on the nuclear test problem, on the Polish-German and Czech-German frontier, and on non-dissemination of hostile propaganda in both East and West Berlin.

9 K told his familiar story about a man who had learned to get along with a smelly goat even though he did not like the goat. The SU had its goats in Italy, Greece, etc. and was living with them. The US now had its goat in Cuba.



Oct 26, 1962. delivered to Embassy 4:45 pm Moscow time; translated by Embassy; sent 7 pm Moscow time; received 6 pm Wash time; first part relayed to White House 8:30 pm. Second part received 8:27, relayed WH 8:45. Third part received 8:23, relayed WH 8:45 (apparent offer); Fourth part received 9 pm, relayed 9:15 (more specific offer)

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your letter of Oct 25. From your letter, I got the feeling that you have some understanding of the situation which has developed and some sense of responsibility. I value this.

Now we have publicly exchanged our evaluations of the events around Cuba and each of us has set forth his explanation and his understanding of these events. Consequently, I would judge that, apparently, a continuation of an exchange of opinions at such a distance, even in the form of secret letters, will hardly add anything to that which one side has already said to the other.

I think you will understand me correctly if you are really concerned about the welfare of the world. Everyone needs peace: both capitalists, if they have not lost their reason, and, still more, communists. People who know how to value not only their own lives but, more than anything, the lives of the peoples. We, communists, are against all wars between states in general and have been defending the cause of peace since we came into the world. We have always regarded war as a calamity, and not as a game nor as a means for the attainment of definite goals. Nor, all the more, as a goal in itself. Our goals are clear, and the means to attain them is labor. War is our enemy and a calamity for all the peoples.

It is thus that we, Soviet people, and together with us, other peoples as well, understand the questions of war and peace. I can, in any case, firmly say this for the peoples of the Socialist countries, as well as for all progressive people who want peace, happiness, and friendship among peoples.

I see, Mr. President, that you too are not devoid of a sense of anxiety for the fate of the world, of understanding, and of what war entails. What would a war give you? You are threatening us with war. But you well know that the very least which you would receive in reply would be that you would experience the same consequences as those which you sent us. And that must be clear to us, people invested in the authority, trust, and responsibility. We must not succumb to intoxication and petty passions, regardless of whether elections are impending in this or that country, or not impending. These are all transient things, but if indeed war should break out, then it would not be in our power to stop it, for such is the logic of war. I have participated in two wars and know that war ends when it has rolled through cities and villages, everywhere sowing death and destruction.

In the name of the Soviet government and the Soviet people, I

4.  
Assure you that your concerns are regarding offensive weapons on Cuba are groundless. It is apparent from you have written me that our conceptions are different on this score, or rather, we have different estimates of these or those military means. Indeed, in reality, the same forms of weapons can have different interpretations.

You are a military man and, I hope, will understand me. Let us take for example a simple cannon. What sort of means is this: offensive or defensive? A cannon is a defensive means if it is set up to defend boundaries or a fortified area. But if one concentrates artillery, and adds to it the necessary number of troops, then the same cannons do become an offensive means, because they prepare and clear the way for infantry to attack. The same happens with missile-nuclear weapons as well, with any type of this weapon.

((This cuts both ways: i.e., against Sov assertion that missiles were "defensive," as well.))

You are mistaken if you think that any of our means on Cuba are offensive. However, let us not quarrel now. It is apparent that I will not be able to convince you of this. But I say to you: you, Mr. President, are a military man and should understand: can one attack, if one has on one's territory even an enormous quantity of missiles of various effective radiuses and various power, but using only these means. These missiles are a means of extermination and destruction. But one cannot attack with these missiles, even nuclear missiles of a power of 100 megatons because only people, troops, can attack. Without people, any means however powerful cannot be offensive.

How can one, consequently, give such a completely incorrect interpretation as you are now giving, to the effect that some sort of means on Cuba are offensive. All the means located there, and I assure you of this, have a defensive character, are on Cuba solely for the purpose of defense, and we have sent them to Cuba ~~only~~ at the request of the Cuban government. You, however, say that these are offensive means.

Second part:

But, Mr. President, do you really seriously think that Cuba can attack the US and that even we together with Cuba can attack you from the territory of Cuba? Can you really think that way? How is it possible? We do not understand this. Has something so new appeared in military strategy that one can think that it is possible to attack thus. I say precisely attack, and not destroy, since barbarians, people who have lost their sense, destroy.

I believe that you have no basis to think this way. You can regard us with distrust, but in any case, you can be calm in this regard, that we are of sound mind and understand perfectly well that if we attack you, you will respond the same way. But you too will receive the same that you hurl against us. And I think that you also ~~think~~ understand this. My conversation with you in Vienna gives me the right to talk to you this way.



of a defensive character to protect our interests in accordance with international law. Why should this be done? To what would all this lead?

Let us normalize relations. We have received an appeal from the Acting Secretary General of the UN, U Thant, with his proposals. I have already answered him. His proposals come to this, that our ~~own~~ side should not transport armaments of any kind to Cuba during a certain period of time, while negotiations are being conducted--and we are ready to enter such negotiations--and the other side should not undertake any sort of piratical actions against vessels engaged in navigation on the high seas. I consider these proposals reasonable. This would be a way out of the situation which has been created, which would give the peoples the possibility of breathing calmly. You have asked what happened, what evoked the delivery of weapons to Cuba? You have spoken about this to your Minister of Foreign Affairs. I will tell you frankly, Mr. President, what evoked it.

We were very grieved by the fact--I spoke about it in Vienna--that a landing took place, that an attack on Cuba was committed, as a result of which many Cubans perished. You yourself told me then that this had been a mistake. I respected that explanation. You repeated it to me several times, pointing out that not everybody occupying a high position would acknowledge his mistakes as you had done. I value such frankness. For my part, I told you that we too possess no less courage; we also acknowledged those mistakes which had been committed during the history of our state, and not only acknowledged, but sharply condemned them.

If you are really concerned about the peace and welfare of your people, and this is your responsibility as President, as I, as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, am concerned for my people. Moreover, the preservation of world peace should be our joint concern, since if, under contemporary conditions, war should break out, it would be a war not only between the reciprocal claims, but a world wide cruel and destructive war.

Why have we proceeded to assist Cuba with military and economic aid? The answer is: we have proceeded to do so only for reasons of humanitarianism. At one time, our people itself had a revolution, when Russia was still a backward country. We were attacked then. We were the target of attack by many countries. The USA participated in that adventure. This has been recorded by participants in the aggression against our country. A whole book has been written about this by General Graves, who, at that time, commanded the US expeditionary corps. Graves called it "The American Adventure in Siberia."

We know how difficult it is to accomplish a revolution and how difficult it is to reconstruct a country on new foundations. We sincerely sympathize with Cuba and the Cuban people, but we are not interfering in questions of domestic structure, we are not interfering in their affairs. The SU desires to help the Cubans build their life as they themselves wish and that others should not hinder them.

You once said that the US was not preparing an invasion. But you also admitted that you sympathized with the Cuban counterrevolutionary emigrants, that you support them and would help them to realize their plans against the present government of Cuba. It is also not a secret to anyone that the threat of armed attack, aggression, has constantly hung, and continues to hang over Cuba. It was only this which impelled us to respond to the request of the Cuban government to furnish it aid for the strengthening of the defensive capacity of this country.

If assurances were given by the President and the government of the US that the USA itself would not participate in an attack on Cuba and would restrain others from actions of this sort, if you would recall your illict, this would immediately change everything. I am not speaking for Fidel Castro, but I think that he and the government of Cuba, evidently, would declare demobilization and would appeal to the people to get down to peaceful labor. Then, too, the question of armaments would disappear, since, if there is no threat, then the destruction, not only of the armaments, which you call offensive, but of all other armaments as well, would look different.

I spoke in the name of the Soviet government in the UN and introduced a proposal for the disarmament of all armies and for the destruction of all armaments. Now then can I now count on those armaments? Armaments bring only disasters. When one accumulates them, this damages the economy, and if one puts them to use, then they destroy people on both sides. Consequently, only a mad man can believe that armaments are the principal means in the life of society. No, they are an enforced loss of human energy, and what is more are for the destruction of man himself. If people do not show wisdom, then in the final analysis they will come to a crash, like blind moles, and then reciprocal extermination will begin.

Let us therefore show statesmanlike wisdom. I propose: we for our part, will declare that our ships, bound for Cuba, will not carry any kind of armaments. You would declare that the US will not invade Cuba with its forces and will not support any sort of forces which might intend to carry out an invasion of Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear.

Mr. President, I appeal to you to weigh well what the aggressive piratical actions, which you have declared the USA intends to carry out in international waters, would lead to. You yourself know that any sensible man simply cannot agree with this, cannot recognize your right to such actions.